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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 005187

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y//CHANGE TEXT IN PARA 6//

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y//CHANGE TEXT IN PARA 4&8//

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KOLY](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KCU](#) [L](#) [CH](#)
SUBJECT: CHINESE ACTIVISTS, SCHOLARS CALL FOR "HUMANE"
OLYMPICS IN OPEN LETTER TO PRC LEADERS

REF: A. FBIS CPP20070807442001

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Classified By: Political Section Internal Unit Chief
Daniel J. Kritenbrink. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) In an indication of the domestic public relations and policy challenges China will increasingly have to grapple with in the run up to the 2008 Beijing Olympic games, 39 mainland Chinese activists, lawyers, scholars, writers and journalists have signed an "open letter" calling on PRC leaders to make good on their stated objective of hosting a "humane" Olympics by improving the human rights situation in China. An Embassy contact who signed the letter said the most significant thing about the document is participation by people who have heretofore not been willing to publicly endorse such efforts. He viewed this as an indication that "well-intentioned" activists hold out "a thread of hope" that they can still influence China's top leaders to back away from repressive policies. End Summary.

Public Call for a "Humane Olympics"

[1](#)2. (C) On the morning of Beijing's one-year Olympic countdown celebration scheduled for the evening of August 8 in Tiananmen Square, 39 mainland Chinese lawyers, scholars, writers and journalists have issued an "open letter" calling on the Chinese government to make good on its stated objective of hosting a "humane Olympics" (Ref A). The letter is entitled, "'One World, One Dream' and Universal Human Rights," a play on Beijing's official Olympic theme of "One World, One Dream," and is addressed to President Hu Jintao, National People's Congress Chairman Wu Bangguo, Premier Wen Jiabao, and a number of international leaders, including those from the International Olympic Committee, UN Human Rights Council and "leaders of democratic states concerned about promoting freedom and human rights."

[1](#)3. (C) The letter declares that China's Olympic theme "should be infused with real improvements in the area of human rights ... commensurate with the Olympic spirit." Noting growing criticism in China and abroad of "violations of human rights in the name of the Beijing Olympics," the letter expresses "grave doubts" about whether under such conditions PRC authorities can host an Olympics "of which

China can be proud." The signers proposed a series of concrete measures to ensure that human rights are factored into official preparations, including the establishment of an independent Beijing "Olympics Watch Committee" to monitor official compliance with human rights norms.

Both Dissidents and Liberal Intellectuals Sign

¶4. (C) While many of the signers are well-known human rights dissidents and democracy activists, others are liberal intellectuals who hold positions in prominent universities and think tanks. Human rights activist Hu Jia (protect), a signatory of the letter who has been under house arrest for some time, told Poloff on Aug 8 that the letter originated with dissident writer Liu Xiaobo and Tiananmen Mothers leader Ding Zilin. Hu nevertheless underscored the significance of participation by prominent intellectuals who had been unwilling to sign such public documents in the past. In his view, the participation of such people shows that the letter is well-intentioned and that the signatories "retain a trace of hope in top decision makers," believing they can "have a constructive influence on President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jianbao."

¶5. (C) Hu Jia also emphasized the "domestic" nature of the letter: all the signatories are Chinese, and the letter is addressed to Chinese leaders, along with other international dignitaries. Referring to recent crackdowns on dissidents and petitioners, Hu said it is "those of us in China who feel the government's Olympic-related policies most directly," which is why it is Chinese intellectuals who have signed. The tone of the letter is sincere and constructive, with the goal being to get the Chinese government to follow through on the promises made when China won the rights to host the games, Hu said.

Olympics as Opportunity

¶6. (C) As in the run up to China's joining the WTO, Hu Jia said, the Olympics provides not only an opportunity for the

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Chinese people, but also for the reform faction of the government to push top leaders toward acceptance of international norms of respect for freedom and human rights. Making a statement as the one-year countdown begins gives authorities an opportunity to cease repression of its citizens and avoid a failed 2008 Olympics "akin to those of Berlin in 1936 and Moscow in 1980," Hu Jia stated. Separately, Tsinghua scholar Qin Hui (protect) told Poloff on Aug 8 that, while governments should not politicize the Olympics, criticism of China from civic groups and NGOs is helpful. The Olympics is an opportunity to push for greater openness in China. The open letter, along with events such as yesterday's press conference by the Committee to Protect Journalists (Ref B) is the kind of pressure that is useful, Qin stated.

Repercussions for Signatories?

¶7. (C) Regarding possible repercussions for signatories of the letter, Hu Jia predicted that authorities will "have a talk" with those who signed. The message authorities will likely deliver privately will be that signing the letter will negatively affect their careers. Chinese authorities are unlikely to arrest anyone over this. The tone of the letter is fairly moderate and the signatories are influential and relatively well-known internationally, Hu said. Tsinghua's Qin Hui separately told Poloff that when organizers of the open letter approached him to ask for his signature, he declined due to fears that signing would make it impossible to publish a new book he is working on.

Mainland Access to Letter Unclear

18. (C) Chinese citizens' ability to access the letter remains unclear. Embassy contacts who used computers connected to Chinese government filters, for example, could find a link to the letter on Hong Kong University's China Media Project website but access to the letter itself was denied. As of the afternoon of Aug 8 Beijing time, there was no evidence of discussion of the letter in PRC chat rooms.
RANDT